

Evening Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - May 17, 2017

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Evening Media Scan: May 17, 2017

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

May 17, 2017

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Online Coverage

Toronto Sun: Liberals violated spirit of ad rules with hydro bill inserts: A-G

By: Shawn Jeffords

Wednesday, May 17, 2017 07:45 PM EDT

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/05/17/liberals-violated-spirit-of-ad-rules-with-hydro-bill-inserts-a-g>

Ontario's Liberal government has violated the spirit of the province's advertising rules by putting inserts in hydro bills which tout an 8% HST cut to ratepayers, says Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk.

However, the Liberals did not actually break any rules for government advertising, Lysyk said in response to a query from Tory energy critic Todd Smith.

Smith said he sought an opinion from the AG after receiving complaints from constituents about the government-friendly inserts.

Lysyk noted this is not the first time the government has used this type of mailout to pat itself on the back.

In 2010, an insert was placed in hydro bills touting the Clean Energy Benefit. The material was sent a month before the last provincial election, she said.

Lysyk said when such material is sent to homeowners, the government's advertising rules do not apply.

While the hydro bill inserts didn't have to be submitted to her office for approval, that doesn't mean they're appropriate, she added.

"While the letter of the law was not broken, the intent or spirit of the act was," Lysyk said of the 2010 insert. "The same could be said of the (hydro insert) you brought to my attention."

The Government Advertising Act, a piece of legislation created in 2004, gave Ontario's Auditor General the ability to approve or reject government ads if they were considered self-promotion.

Those powers were rolled back in 2015 by the Liberal government and Lysyk has warned that her office now acts as little more than a "rubber-stamp" for government ads which previously would not have been approved.

Asked about the plan by the Tories during question period Wednesday, Energy Minister Glen Thibeault defended the insert.

"I know that the PCs don't want people to be able to plan and look at their budgets, especially with the utilities" he added. "We have about 68 utilities in this province that they need to plan to ensure that they can inform their customers, so they understand that."

Toronto Sun: Conservative leader Patrick Brown would stop 'reckless spending'

By: Shawn Jeffords

Wednesday, May 17, 2017 06:37 PM EDT

<http://www.torontosun.com/2017/05/17/conservative-leader-patrick-brown-would-stop-reckless-spending>

The \$1.1 billion blown during the Liberal gas plant scandal is gone and Patrick Brown says he can't get it back.

But the Progressive Conservative leader said Wednesday that he can stop the bleeding when it comes to the "reckless spending" embarked upon by Ontario's Liberal government.

In a wide-ranging speech before the Canadian Club, Brown said that money wasted on the gas plant scandal is now being added onto ratepayers hydro bills.

And the Liberals' latest hydro move, which is before the legislature for debate, will just add to the problem and increase Ontario's \$312-billion debt, he said.

"I can't get the money back that we lost on gas plants," he said. "That's gone and that's hidden in your hydro bill. But what I can change is making sure that we don't continue to charge you for this massive over-generation and continuing to have the government commit itself to more generation that we don't need."

Brown said if he's elected premier in 2018, he will stop signing new generation deals which continue to rack up costs for the government. Over the past 14 years, the Liberals have added \$174 billion to the province's debt and it costs Ontarians \$12 billion a year in interest payments, he said

"Remember, it's not ideology that bankrupts governments; it's the math of rising interest costs."

Brown was asked about government criticism that he has no plan to address the hydro system.

"I think right now the Liberals are trying to goad me into coming up with some policy out of left field that they can attack," he said. "They can't defend their own record. How could they? We're a have-not province. We've had our credit down-graded three times. Of course, they want to make the election about someone else."

"This next election is going to be a referendum on their record," he added.

Earlier Wednesday, Premier Kathleen Wynne defended the government's hydro plan during a morning press conference.

"We actually have a plan to reduce people's electricity costs," she insisted. "It's fine that the opposition can decide that they have a critique of that plan but the fact is, we're doing it."

Global News Commentary: Liberals pointing at others, instead of
By: Scott Thompson
May 17, 2017 5:00 am

<http://globalnews.ca/news/3457199/commentary-liberals-pointing-at-others-instead-of-their-own-policy/>

ou know your political party is in trouble when it's spending more time finger-pointing the finger at opponents rather than trying to sell its own policy, especially when the party has a majority.

On Monday, I received a press release from the provincial Liberals with the headline: "NDP to vote against lowering electricity bills — Andrea Horwath wants to deny Ontarians up to 40-50% off bills."

No, I would suggest — her party has their own plan to provide relief and does not need to hitch their horse to the Liberals' energy "mistake."

Then yesterday, I received another press release from the Liberals: "Patrick Brown is still the man with no plan — policy promised 76 days ago still nowhere in sight."

The last time I checked, the provincial election was still over a year away. Why would he get in the way of the Liberals' self-destruction, which shows no signs of stopping?

Clearly Wynne's electricity re-financing isn't sitting well with Ontarians, especially when a leaked Liberal document revealed the projected costs of the extended loan.

So rather than fix their problems, the provincial Liberals are merely trying to distract us from the obvious.

However, when you have been in power as long as they have, every mistake is theirs.

Oshawa Express: coming up short on ideas for hydro

By: oshawaexpress

May 17, 2017

<http://oshawaexpress.ca/pcs-coming-up-short-on-ideas-for-hydro/>

Re: "Liberals have no credibility on hydro," May 3, 2017

Dear Editor,

I was disappointed but not surprised to read MPP Lorne Coe's letter in The Oshawa Express.

The PCs have been eager to criticize the Fair Hydro Plan, but have no plan of their own. As I write this, it's been more than 60 days since we announced how we will provide real relief on electricity rates. In that time, the PCs have failed to provide a single constructive idea on how to reduce electricity costs and help Ontarians.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan provides substantial, widespread and long-lasting relief that will have an immediate impact on peoples' lives. Through the Fair Hydro Plan, our government is cutting electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all families starting this summer, along with about half a million farms and small businesses. It is the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, with rates also held to inflation for four years. Our plan is about real relief for Ontarians and a way to ensure greater fairness in our electricity system.

Governments of all stripes neglected investing in our electricity system for years, which led to a breaking point with the province-wide blackout in 2003. We had to rebuild, and we chose to do it with clean energy. We closed our dirty coal plants, which was not only the single largest climate change initiative in North America, but the right thing to do. Smog days are now a thing of the past in Ontario.

While the PCs are not the only ones to blame, their last government left our electricity system in shambles. We had to invest in the system, and that carried a cost. Our system is cleaner and more reliable than it has ever been, and now the Fair Hydro Plan is making it more affordable.

The Opposition has an important job to do holding government to account, but an important part of that job is bringing ideas to the table. It's my hope that Patrick Brown and the PCs start taking their job more seriously.

Glenn Thibeault

Minister of Energy

Bayshore Broadcasting Bruce MPP Proposes Relief For Small Business

By: Peter Jackson

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

http://www.bayshorebroadcasting.ca/news_item.php?NewsID=93157

Tory MPP Lisa Thompson proposes amendment to remove Debt Retirement Charge from small business energy bills.

Huron-Bruce Tory MPP Lisa Thompson is challenging the Liberal government to ease the burden on small businesses, through her proposed amendment to the Electricity Act.

Under the legislation, the debt retirement charge would be wiped off the Hydro bills of small commercial

enterprises.

Thompson says the Liberal government collected \$859 million from the charge to small businesses in 2015-16.

The debt retirement charge was taken off residential Hydro bills in 2011.

The Auditor General that year reported that the charges earned the Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation enough to pay off Hydro One's \$7.8 billion in stranded debt.

Thompson quotes the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which says the debt retirement charge represents two to five per-cent of businesses' Hydro bills, regardless of the size.

Wawa News: NDP calls for legislative session to be extended
May 17, 2017 @ 10:51

<http://wawa-news.com/index.php/2017/05/17/ndp-calls-for-legislative-session-to-be-extended/>

Kathleen Wynne is about to enact a plan that will cause hydro bills to soar for decades, and the public isn't even being given time to weigh in. That's why the NDP is calling for the legislative session to be extended by at least one week.

Today, Wynne's Liberals will force through a motion that will limit debate, and cut the window for public hearings down to a meagre six-hour window.

"The Liberals want to allow the public a mere six hours of feedback on a deal that they expect us all to spend 30 years paying back," said Horwath. "Obviously, Kathleen Wynne still isn't getting it. People can't take any more of her hydro bill hikes. By extending the sitting, we can give people an opportunity to contact the Liberals and have their say. Families and businesses deserve a chance to tell Kathleen Wynne about the affordability crisis they're already facing before she hikes their hydro bills again."

Horwath will call for the additional week through a unanimous consent motion in the house Wednesday morning.

"We can't let Kathleen Wynne do any more damage to people's cost of living," said Horwath. "The NDP team and I are willing to stay for as long as it takes to let everyone have their say, and properly debate the Liberal hydro borrowing scheme. We'll do whatever it takes to convince Kathleen Wynne that we need to get this one right – because Ontarians just can't take any more hikes on their hydro bills."

TV Transcripts

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